UK Visas
& Immigration

The sponsorship management system (SMS) manuals

Step by step guide for sponsors

Manual 1 of 12: Introduction to SMS

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Additional SMS manuals

There are 12 SMS manuals available, plus two supplementary policy guides for completing a CoS and CAS. The manuals are grouped into three categories: common, CAS and CoS. The table below describes the purpose and audience of each manual.

You should read all manuals applicable to your licence before contacting the relevant helpdesk.

Manual reference	Manual title	Type	Purpose	Audience
Manual 1	Introduction to SMS	Common	Use this manual to log into SMS, change your password, manage SMS users and view important messages posted by the Home Office. In addition, this manual explains who should use SMS and for what purpose. The manual features a full introduction to SMS as well as a comprehensive troubleshooting section.	All sponsors
Manual 2	Managing your licence	Common	To help sponsors manage their key personnel, change their licence details, and apply for allocations of CoS/CAS.	All sponsors

Manual 3	Applications, renewals and services	Common	To help sponsors apply for Premium customer service, apply or decline to apply for a Basic Compliance Assessment, renew or decline to renew their sponsor licence and manage action plans.	All sponsors
Manual 4	Creating and assigning CAS	CAS	To help sponsors create and assign individual and batches of CAS.	Sponsors licensed in Tier 4 (General and / or Child)
Manual 4a	Creating a CAS – guide for education sponsors	CAS	This manual contains supplementary information on completing a CAS. Use this guide to determine what information is necessary in each field of the CAS.	Sponsors licensed in Tier 4 (General and / or Child)
Manual 5	Reporting student activity	CAS	To help sponsors report student activity, for example if a student's circumstances change. This manual also contains help with reporting fee updates and adding sponsor notes to CAS that have already been assigned.	Sponsors licensed in Tier 4 (General and / or Child)
Manual 6	Bulk Data Transfer of CAS	CAS	To help sponsors use the bulk data transfer (BDT) functions of SMS. You must have a bespoke IT system in place to use BDT.	Sponsors licensed in Tier 4 (General and / or Child)

Manual 7	Miscellaneous CAS functions	CAS	To help sponsors complete all other functions of CAS, such as managing batches of CAS, managing pre-stored addresses for use when creating CAS, transferring ownership of CAS, printing CAS and exporting CAS.	Sponsors licensed in Tier 4 (General and / or Child)
Manual 8	Creating and assigning CoS	CoS	To help sponsors create and assign individual and batches of CoS.	Sponsors licensed in any Tier 2 or Tier 5 category
Manual 8a	Creating a CoS – guide for business sponsors	CoS	This guide contains supplementary information on completing a CoS. Use this guide to determine what information is necessary in each field of the CoS.	Sponsors licensed in any Tier 2 or Tier 5 category
Manual 9	Reporting worker activity	CoS	To help sponsors report worker activity, for example if a worker's circumstances change. This manual also contains help with adding sponsor notes to CoS that have already been assigned.	Sponsors licensed in any Tier 2 or Tier 5 category
Manual 10	Miscellaneous CoS functions	CoS	To help sponsors complete all other functions of CoS, such as managing batches of CoS, managing pre-stored addresses for use when creating CoS, transferring ownership of CoS, and printing CoS.	Sponsors licensed in any Tier 2 or Tier 5 category

Manual 11	Tier 5 Creative and Sporting groups of CoS	CoS	To help sponsors create and manage groups of CoS. Groups of CoS are only available to sponsors licensed in Tier 5 (Creative and Sporting).	Sponsors licensed in any Tier 2 or Tier 5 category
Manual 12	Restricted CoS	CoS	To help sponsors apply for restricted CoS, track applications for restricted CoS and once granted, create restricted CoS.	Sponsored licensed in Tier 2 (General)

Glossary

SMS	Sponsorship Management System
CoS	Certificate of Sponsorship
CAS	Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
AO	Authorising Officer
KC	Key Contact
BDT	Bulk Data Transfer
SELT	Secure English Language Test
.XML	Extensible Mark-up Language
.PDF	Portable Document Format
Automation	On 6 April 2014 we introduced new functionality in SMS to automatically renew CoS allocations and to apply changes to your organisation address, or the address of your AO and KC. We will write to you if you meet the criteria and automation has been set.

Introduction

What is SMS?

SMS is an online tool that allows you to administer your day-to-day sponsorship duties and activities, such as assigning certificates of sponsorship (CoS) and confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS) and reporting changes to a migrant's circumstances. SMS should be used for:

- managing your key personnel and licence details;
- creating, assigning and viewing CAS/CoS;
- applying for and assigning restricted CoS;
- reporting activities relating to your sponsored workers and/or students;
- renewing your allocations and applying for additional CoS and/or CAS;
- applying for Premium customer service (if desired);
- applying for Tier 4 Sponsor status;
- tracking Premium, HTS and licence renewal applications; and
- paying for and tracking the progress of action plans.

Why should these manuals be used?

The SMS manuals are designed to help sponsors with the technical aspects of SMS and feature a step-by-step visual guide for each function. For policy-related information you should read and refer to the guidance for sponsors. For help completing a CAS or CoS and advice on what information is required in each field, you should refer to the SMS guide 4a – Creating a CAS – guide for education sponsors and SMS guide 8a – Creating a CoS – guide for business sponsors. Within these manuals, some screen examples have been shortened to fit within the guide.

Will SMS work on my computer?

SMS has been tested on a range of versions of the most popular browsers, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari as well as some mobile browser variants. SMS should work on most browsers released in the last five years. If you experience problems, you should upgrade your current browser to the latest, stable release or try a different browser. You should not view SMS with beta versions of browsers (i.e. the browser has not been released publicly and is not the latest 'stable' release of the browser).

Logging in and out of SMS

SMS can be accessed here. You should bookmark this link for ease of future access.

To access SMS your organisation must hold a valid licence and you must be registered on the sponsor licence as either a Level 1 or 2 user.

When a Level 1 user logs into SMS, they will see relevant messages posted by the Home Office, targeted by tier and category. The Level 1 user must read these messages before using SMS. Messages can also be viewed at any time by selecting the **SMS message board** link from the **Licence summary, applications and services** menu.

For your security, SMS will log you out of your current session after 20 minutes of inactivity. If this occurs you can log in again, as normal. You should log out when you have completed your actions on SMS. To do this at any time, select **Log out** from the main menu; you should save any data before doing so.

You **MUST** only have one instance (tab or window) of SMS open at any one time to avoid system anomalies and error messages.

User ID and password

When a sponsor licence application is approved, the first log in ID for SMS is sent by post to the Authorising Officer. The password is sent directly to the email address of the Level 1 user nominated in the sponsor licence application. It is the responsibility of the Authorising Officer to provide the login details to the Level 1 user.

If your SMS account has been requested by an existing Level 1 user, they can obtain your user ID from the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen (located in the **Licence summary, applications and services** menu item) in SMS. Once the request is approved, your password will be sent to you by email.

Your user ID and password are for **your use only** and must be kept secure. You must never disclose your password to another person. The details of penalties that can be imposed for disclosing your password or any other breach of your sponsor duties can be found in the guidance for sponsors.

If you enter an incorrect ID or password three times your account will be temporarily locked. You should try logging in again after 20 minutes. Both the user ID and password fields are case sensitive.

Checking your licence details

You should check the **Licence summary** function in SMS (located in the **Licence summary, applications and services** menu item) regularly to ensure your licence details are accurate. If your details are incorrect you must submit a request to change them.

Access to SMS

The status of your licence can affect your access to SMS. If your licence has expired or has been revoked you will not be able to log in to SMS. The access details of each other licence status can be seen below:

- **Licensed and fully active:** users can access all functions of SMS, relevant to the tiers and categories in which they are licensed. For example, a sponsor licensed in Tier 4 only can access all functions except those found in the **Workers** section.
- **Suspended, removed from the Tier 4 Sponsor register** or **Dormant:** users can access SMS but cannot perform some functions, such as: requesting additional allocations; requesting renewal of a licence; applying for Premium customer service and a Basic Compliance Assessment; creating, assigning, exporting and viewing single or batches of CAS/CoS; providing bulk fee updates; or any restricted CoS functions.
- **B-Rated**: if you are a Tier 2 or Tier 5 licence holder and are currently B-rated you cannot apply for or assign restricted CoS.

Different user levels (1 and 2) also have restrictions:

- Level 1 users can access all applicable functions of SMS (subject to the above licence status restrictions).
- Level 2 users have restricted access and are unable to view and use the **Licence summary, applications and services** menu or **Restricted CoS** sub-menu within the **Workers** section. They also cannot view the message screen presented to Level 1 users upon logging in to the system. In additional, Level 2 users can only report against or view CoS and/or CAS which they own.

Navigation in SMS

Throughout SMS, fields marked with a red asterisk (*) are mandatory and must be completed to progress to the next stage.

- The menu located on the left-hand side of the screen, which is not featured on all of the screen examples, provides quick links (if applicable) to **Licence summary, applications and services**, **Workers**, **Students**, **Change password**, **Contact** and **Log out**. If a button is unavailable, shown in SMS as greyed out, either mandatory details have not been completed, your licence status does not

allow you to perform the function or the button is time-sensitive and only available at specific times (for example, the **Next** button on the **Licence renewal introduction** screen is only available from 90 days before your licence is due to expire).

- If you wish to search for an individual worker or student, the passport number or CAS/CoS number are the most efficient search criteria. Wider search parameters will yield a greater range of results.

Communication

SMS will notify you by email of important events during the lifespan of your licence, such as expiry of allocations and expiry of licence. In order to receive these timely updates, please ensure your email filter settings are adjusted to allow emails from **noreply@homeoffice.gov.uk**. You should also ensure that any emails from the domain '@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk' are not re-directed to spam or junk folders, as we may contact you from other mailboxes from time to time.

Failure to act on emails sent to you by SMS or from other Home Office sources could result in the loss of your sponsor licence or your being unable to assign CoS or CAS.

Troubleshooting

Most system problems can be resolved simply by logging out of SMS, closing and restarting your browser and logging back into SMS. If this does not resolve your issue, please see below for help with other common issues.

Issue / Error message	Cause	Resolution
I cannot assign a CoS/CAS	The **Assign** button is greyed out	One or more fields in the CoS/CAS have been overlooked or have been incorrectly completed. The most common fields that cause issues are: **Gender**: please ensure this field is completed, as it is often missed; Main work/study address: this is a set of fields that require the user to select a button to access. The section heading is suffixed with the phrase 'mandatory for assignment'; **Gross salary**: use format '1234' or '1234.99' (no symbols); **For each:** please ensure this dropdown menu is completed, as it is often missed; **Tick to confirm sponsor certifies maintenance for the migrant**: although this tick box is not mandatory, it is often missed which can lead to migrant applications for leave to enter or remain being refused.
I cannot assign a CoS/CAS. Error message received '*The assignment could not be processed due to there being insufficient remaining CoS in your allocation* (or similar)'.	Insufficient remaining CoS in your allocation	Apply for additional CoS/CAS by selecting the **Request CoS/CAS allocation** increase menu item in **Licence summary, applications and services**.

I am unable to report activity against a CoS/CAS. Error message received '*No CAS were found for the search criteria given*.'	CoS/CAS is not at the 'USED' status	1. You can only report against a CoS/CAS once it has been used in association with a migrant's application for leave to enter or remain; OR 2. You are a Level 2 user and you do not own the CoS/CAS (i.e. you did not create it or have it transferred to you).
I cannot apply for Tier 4 Sponsor status	The **Next** button is greyed out	You are not eligible to apply for Tier 4 Sponsor status because of one or more of the following: • you are not within the renewal period; check **Licence summary** for the renewal opening date; • you are B-rated; • you currently hold Tier 4 Sponsor status and are not within the renewal period.
I cannot renewal my sponsor licence	The **Next** button is greyed out	You are not within the licence renewal period; check 'Licence summary' for the renewal opening date.
I cannot apply for or renew Premium customer service	The **Next** button is greyed out	You are not eligible to apply for Premium customer service because your rating is not appropriate or you are already a Premium service customer. If you are an existing Premium customer and you are unable to apply for any other reason, please contact your Licence Manager.
I am unable to find a CoS/CAS when searching	Level restrictions	You are a Level 2 user and you cannot view or edit CoS/CAS that you have not created or had transferred to you. A Level 1 user or the original Level 2 user must find the relevant CoS/CAS.
I am unable to find a CoS/CAS when searching	Incorrect search parameters	Ensure the search parameters are correct. If you are still unable the find the CoS/CAS, try searching using the CoS/CAS or passport number, or use the 'Advanced' search function.

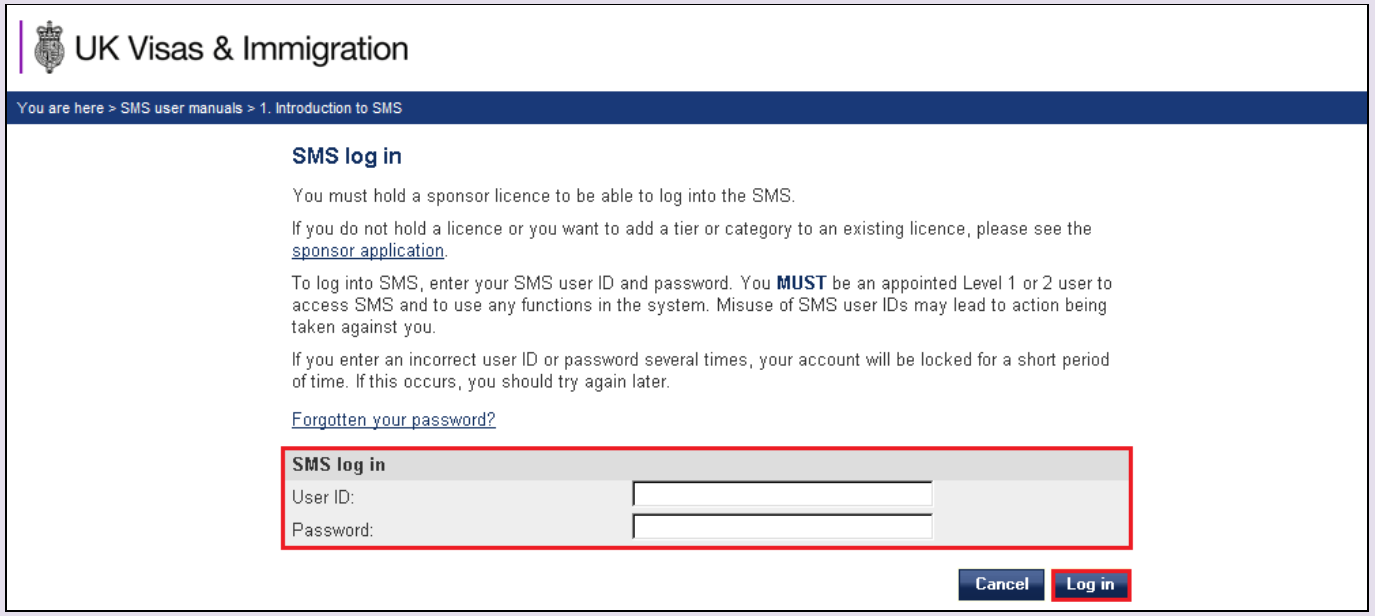
I am unable to manage live CoS/CAS. Error message received '*No CAS were found for the search criteria given.'*	No CoS/CAS found when searching	1. You can only manage live CoS/CAS before the CoS/CAS is used in association with a migrant application. CoS/CAS available to manage will have the status of ASSIGNED; OR 2. You are a Level 2 user and you do not own the CoS/CAS.
I am unable to log in. Error message received '*Please make sure you enter the correct user ID and password, as your previous attempt does not match our records*'.	Invalid attempts to log in	You have previously entered incorrect details three times or more. If you are certain that you are entering the correct details, wait for 30 minutes and try again.
I am cannot apply for annual allocations	No tiers/categories are displayed	Either the renewal window is not yet open or the allocation has been automatically renewed. To determine if an allocation has been renewed automatically, check the 'Outstanding annual allocation requests' grid (located at **Licence summary, applications and services/Request renewal of annual CoS/CAS allocation**). To determine if the renewal window is open, check the **Licence summary** screen for the date on which you can apply to renew. You can apply for additional CoS/CAS by selecting **Request CoS/CAS allocation increase** at any time.
I wasn't notified of expiration of CoS/CAS allocations or licence.	Automatic email was delivered to 'spam' folder.	Please ensure your email filter settings are adjusted to allow emails from **noreply@homeoffice.gov.uk**.

SMS manuals

Guide 1: How to log in for the first time

Follow the step by step instructions below to log into SMS for the first time. Please note, the sponsor licence application user ID cannot be used for logging on to SMS.

You should read the guidance for sponsors before logging into SMS for the first time.

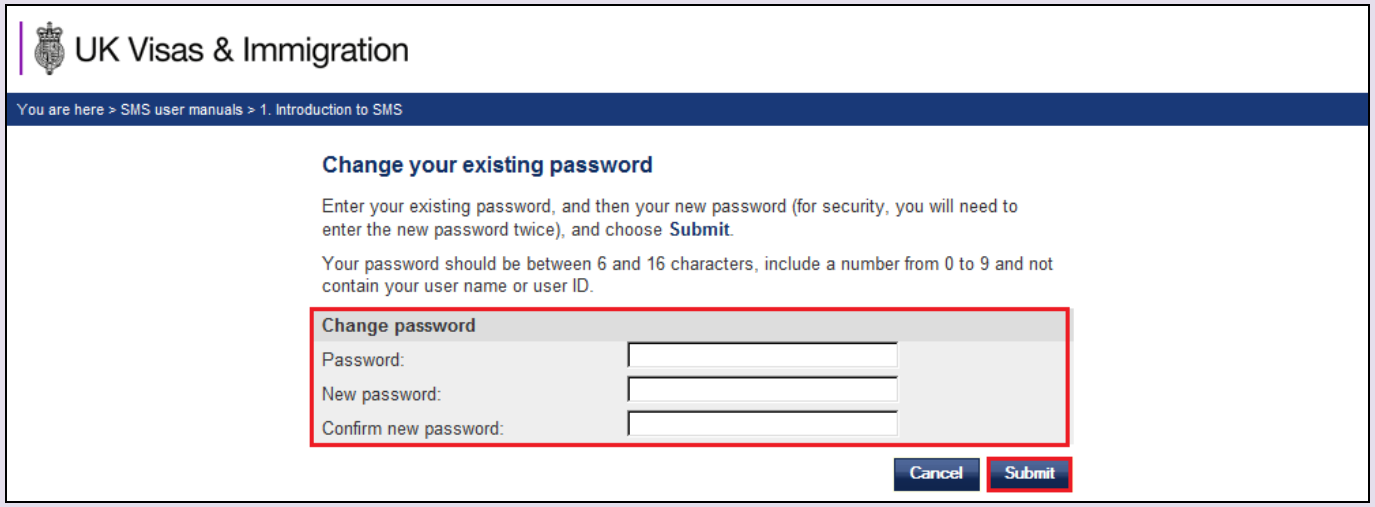
Step	Instruction	Screen example
1	From the **SMS log in** screen, enter the user ID assigned to you and the password either emailed to you or provided by your Authorising Officer, then select **Log in**.	

Note You may find it easier to copy and paste your password from the email, if applicable.

2

When logging in for the first time, you must change your password.

Enter the password originally emailed or provided to you in the first field, then your new password in the next two fields (ensure both passwords match), then select **Submit**.



Note

Your new password must conform to the following standards:

- must be between six and 16 characters in length;
- must contain at least five letters;
- must contain at least one number;
- cannot contain your user ID or your name;
- use only the characters a-z, A-Z and 0-9; and
- not feature any special characters.

Passwords are case-sensitive, so take care when setting your new password.

Ensure your password is as strong as possible. Try substituting numbers for letters, such as using 5 instead of S, or 1 instead of L. For example, apples could be: ApP1e5.

3

After confirming your change of password, the **Sponsorship management system (SMS)** home screen is displayed.

Select **Log out** from the menu on the left side of the screen if you wish to log out of SMS.

Note

1. Each menu will only be visible if applicable to your licence. **Licence summary, applications and services** is visible to Level 1 users of all licences (except dormant licences), but **not** Level 2 users.
2. The **Workers** menu is only visible if you are licensed under any category of Tier 2 or Tier 5. From the **Workers** menu, the **Restricted CoS** sub-menu is only visible to Level 1 users and only if you are licensed under Tier 2 (General).
3. The **Students** menu is only visible if you are licensed under one or both categories of Tier 4.

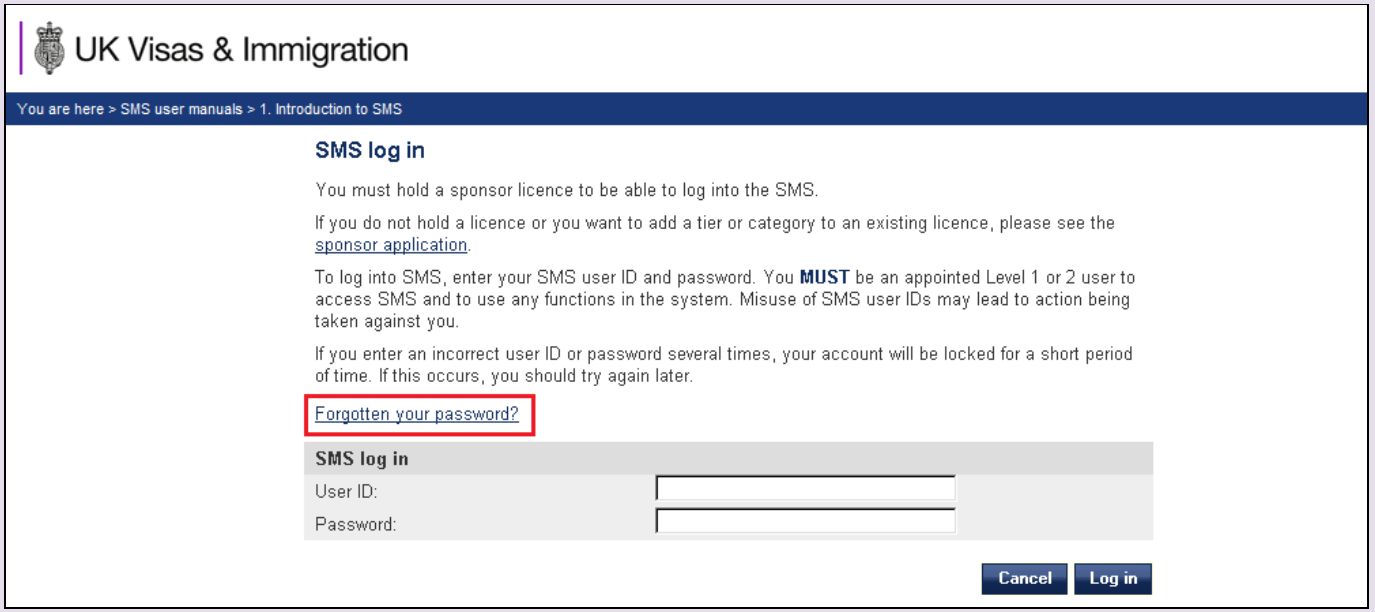
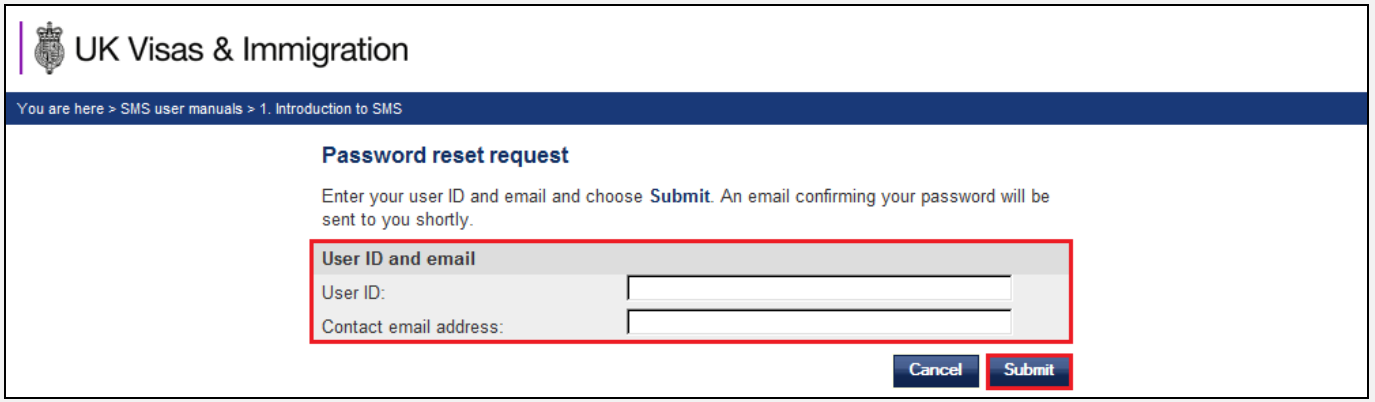
Guide 2: How to reset your password

Follow the step by step instructions below to request a password reset.

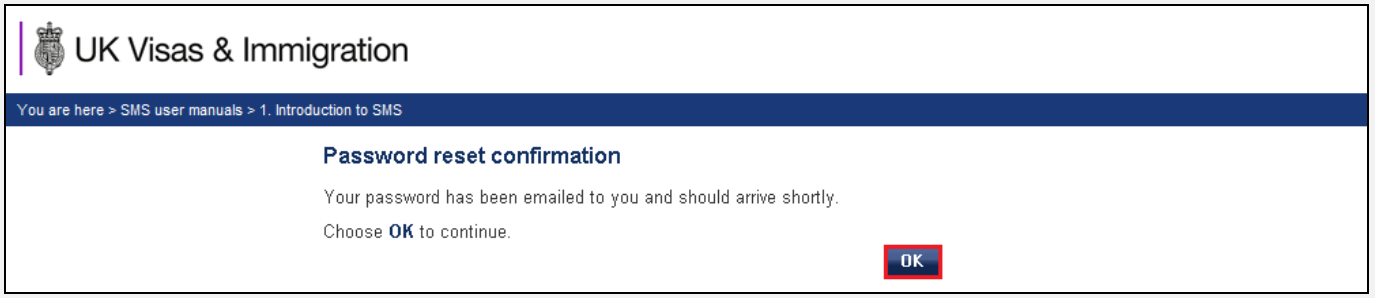
If you cannot remember your user ID and are the only Level 1 user with access to SMS, you should check the letter sent to your AO when your sponsor licence was granted.

If you are unable to locate the letter, you can contact the Business or Educators Helpdesk (as applicable), who will be able to provide the user ID to you. Please note, the helpdesks will only be able to disclose licence details if the original email came from an address registered with an active member of key personnel on the licence. Once they have confirmed your identity, the helpline will email the user ID to the AO to forward on to the Level 1 user.

If you have more than one Level 1 user on SMS, you should ask a different Level 1 user to obtain your user ID from the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen (located at **Licence summary, applications and services/Manage your Level 1 and 2 users**).

Step	Instruction	Screen example
1	From the **SMS log in** screen, select **Forgotten your password?**	
2	From the **Password reset request** screen, enter your user ID and your email address (to which your password was originally sent), then select **Submit**.	

Note	If you receive an error message '*Please make sure you enter the correct user ID and password, as your previous attempt does not match our records'* this may be because you have previously entered incorrect details three times or more. If you are certain that you are entering the correct details, wait for 30 minutes and try again.
3	The **Password reset confirmation** screen is displayed. A temporary password will be generated and sent to you immediately; check your email account (including junk/spam mail) for your new password and then select **OK**.
Note	Once you have logged in with the temporary password you will have to change your password again, as you did when you logged in for the first time.



Guide 3: How to request a new Level 1 user or create a new Level 2 user

Follow the step by step instructions to request a new Level 1 user or create a new Level 2 user.

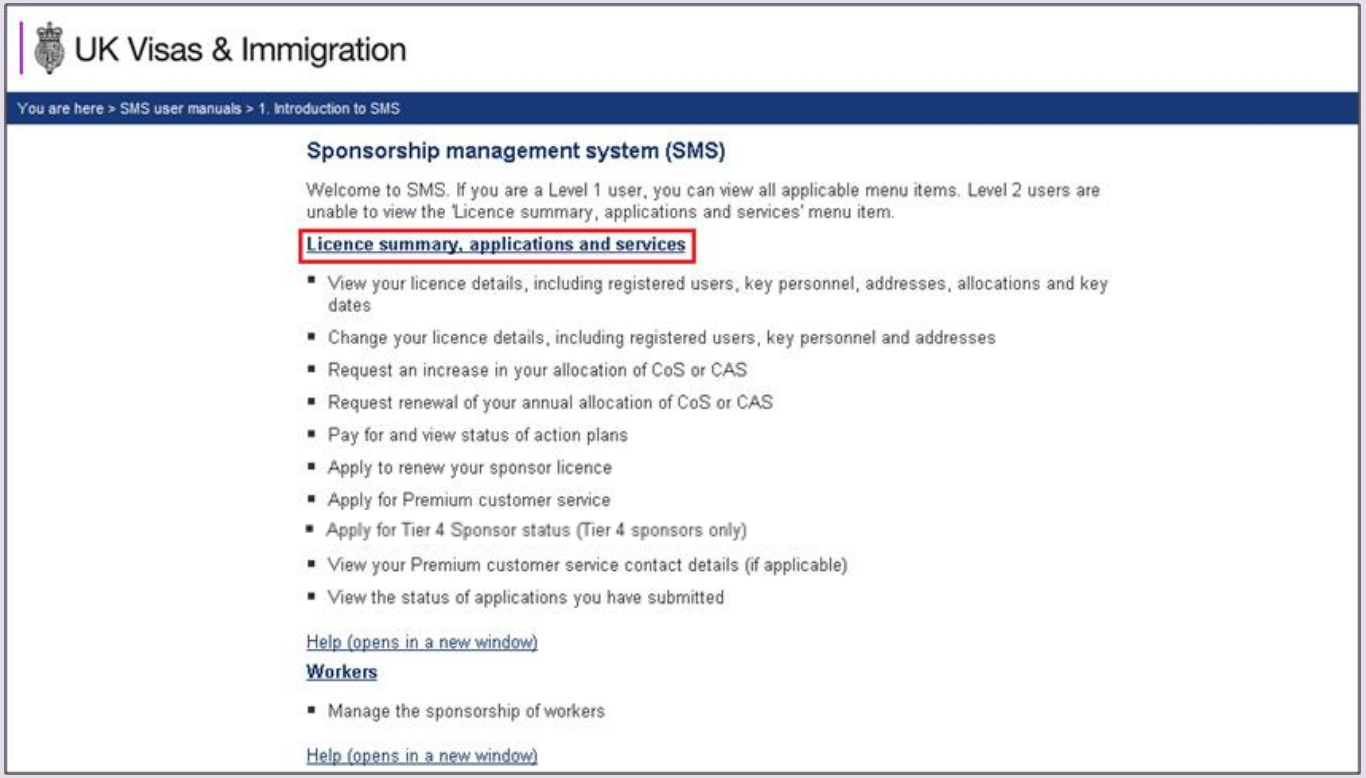
You can appoint as many Level 1 users as you think you will need, based on the structure of your business and your business needs. However, at least one of your Level 1 users must be a settled worker, unless:

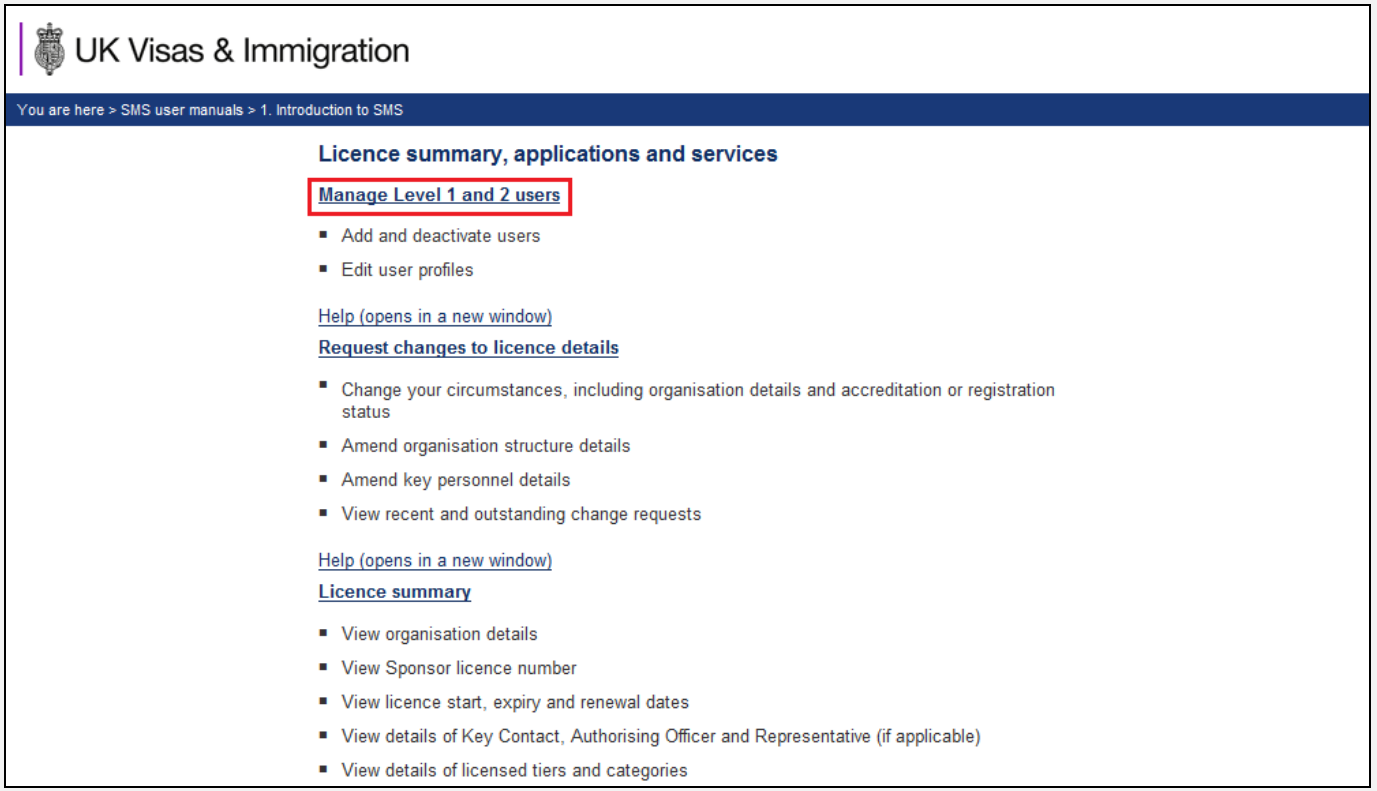
a) you are a diplomatic mission or international organisation licensed under Tier 5 (International Agreement); or
b) your Authorising Officer is a person with valid leave as a:
    1. Representative of an Overseas Business; or
    2. Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) migrant; or
    3. Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) migrant.

All user IDs can be found in the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen.

As the AO is responsible for the actions of all SMS users, it is advisable to keep the number of Level 1 users to the minimum necessary for the effective maintenance of your licence. You can appoint as many Level 2 users as you need, although Level 2 users have a restricted range of permissions. A Level 2 user can: assign CoS/CAS to migrants and report migrant activity on CoS/CAS that they have personally created and assigned (for example, report that a student completes their studies early or a worker does not attend).

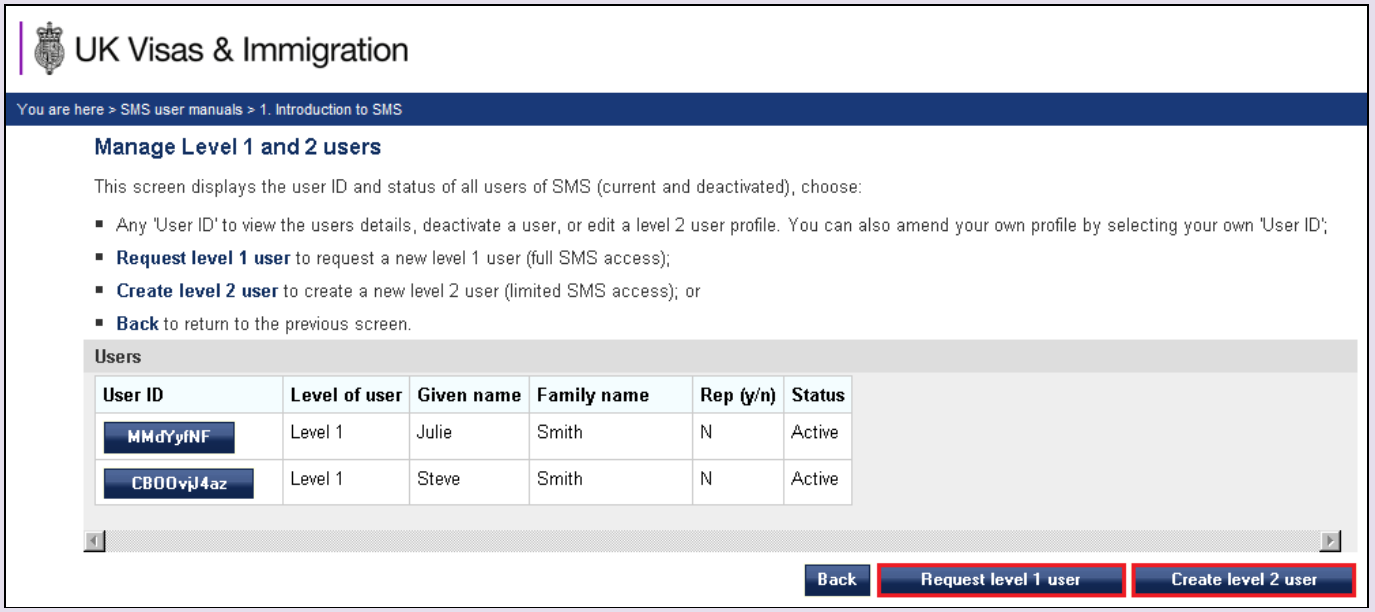
If you have no active Level 1 users registered on your account, you must complete a Sponsor change of circumstances form, which is available from our website.

Step	Instruction	Screen example
1	From the **Sponsorship management system (SMS)** screen, select **Licence summary, applications and services**.	

2	From the **Licence summary, applications and services** screen, select **Manage Level 1 and 2 users**.	

3

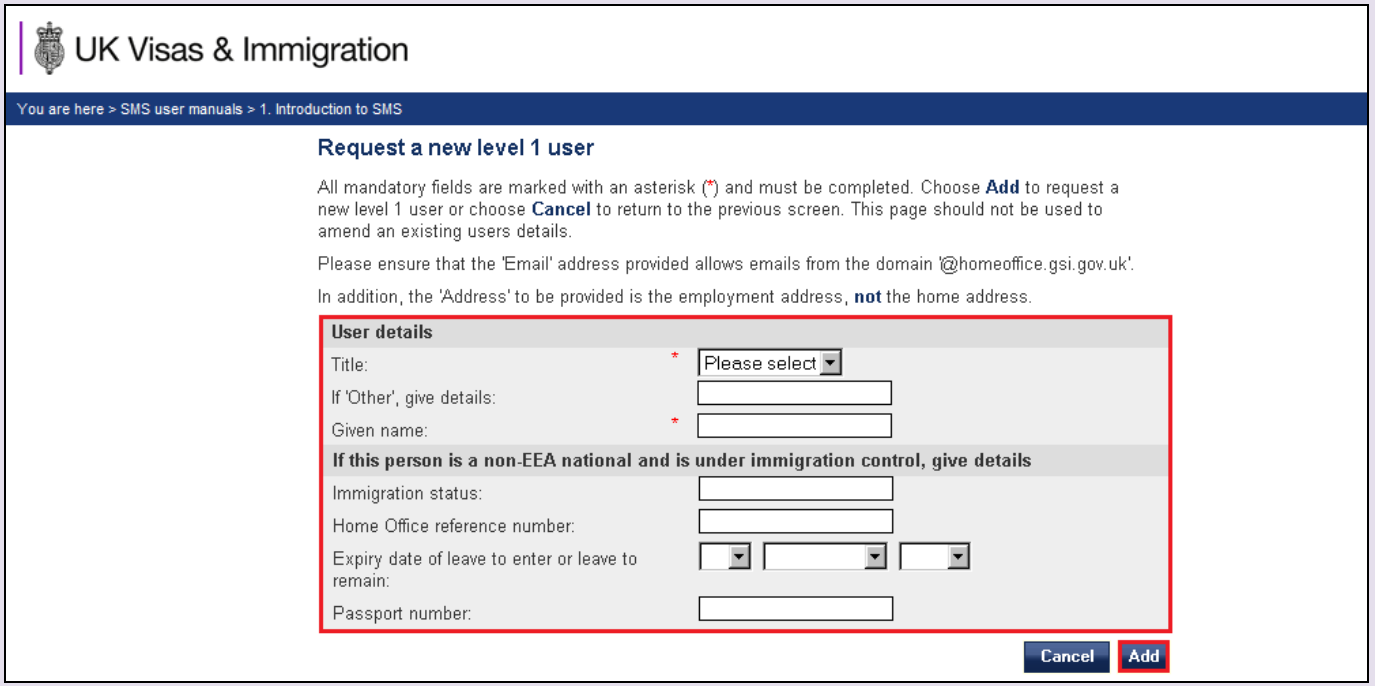
From the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen, select either the **Request level 1 user** or **Create level 2 user** button.



Note

The *status* field indicates the current status of the user. You can track the progress of your request to add a Level 1 user by checking the status on this screen:

- **Requested** - the request to add a Level 1 user has been submitted to us for consideration;
- **Active** - the user is active;
- **Refused** - the request to add a Level 1 user has been refused by us; or
- **Deactivated by sponsor** - the user has been deactivated by a Level 1 user; or
- **Deactivated by UKVI** - we have deactivated the user.

4	From the **Request a new level 1 user** or **Create a new Level 2 user** screen, enter the details of the new user, then select **Add**.	

Note

1. The email address must belong to an individual, not a shared mailbox, as the new user's password will be sent to this address and must not be shared with anyone else.

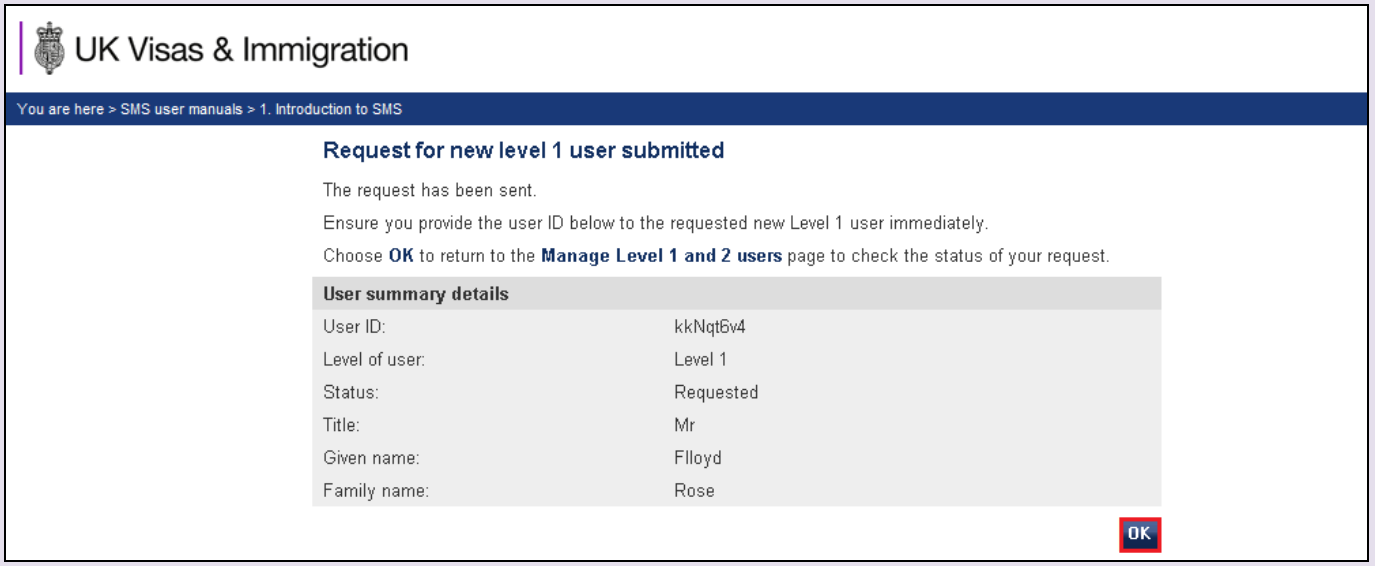
2. The **Address** required is the work address, **not** the person's home address.

5

If you are creating a Level 2 user, the new user account is created automatically.

If adding a Level 1 user, your request is submitted to us for assessment.

Select **OK**.

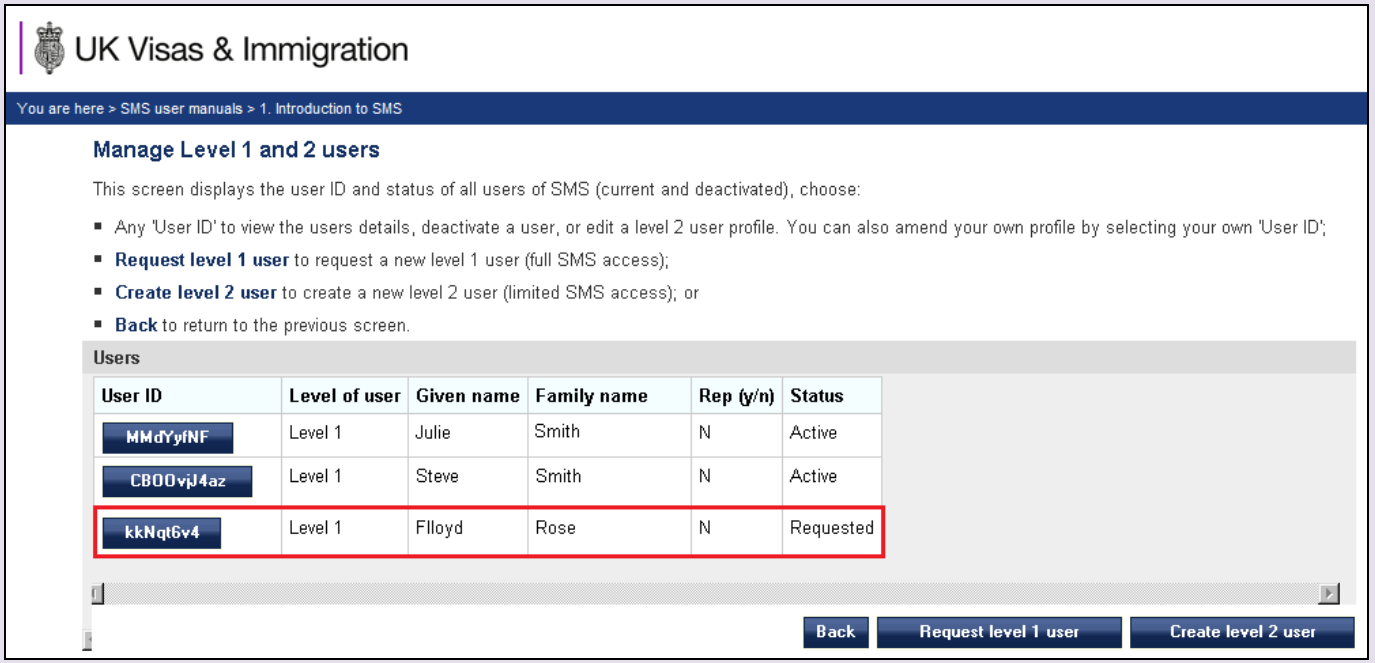


Note You should note the new user ID and pass it to the proposed new user.

6

If your request has been approved, the new user's password will be emailed to the address provided.

You can review a request to add a Level 1 user by referring to the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen and checking the **Status** field.



Note If the status is *Active* the request has been granted and the password will be sent by email to the new user. If the status is *Refused*, we will write to the AO to advise them why the request has refused.

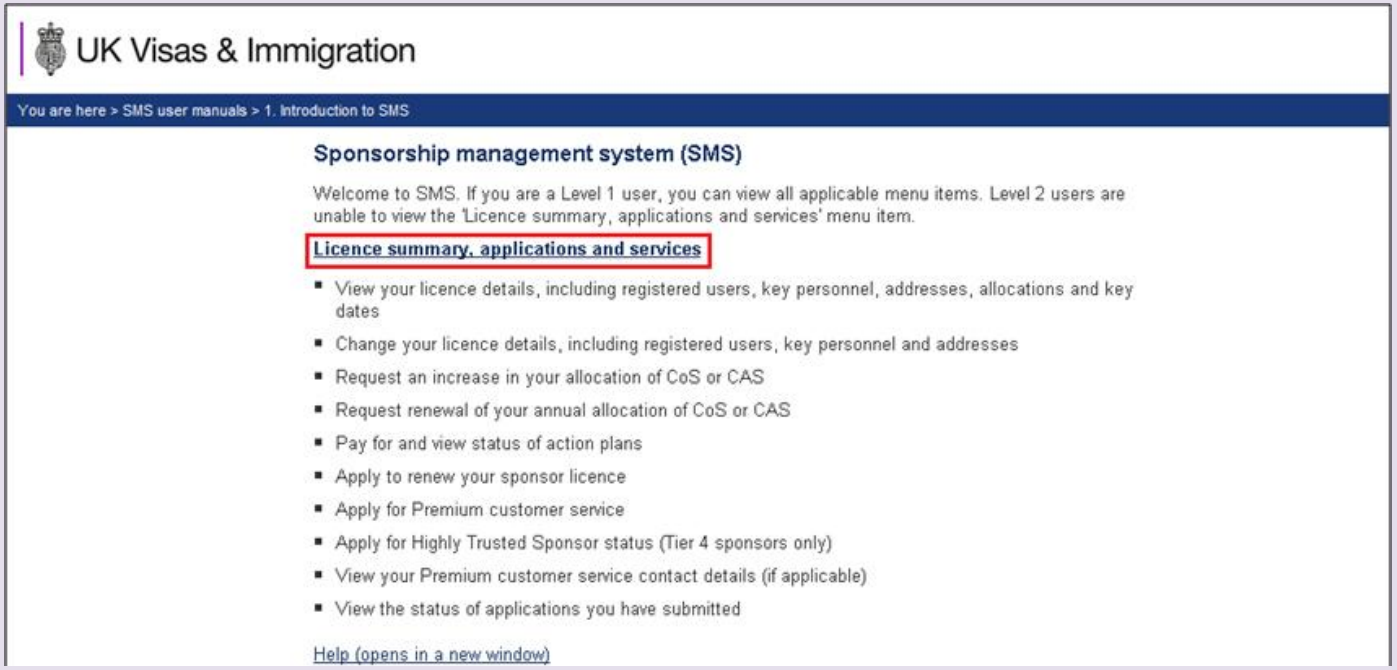
Guide 4: How to amend or deactivate a Level 1 or 2 user

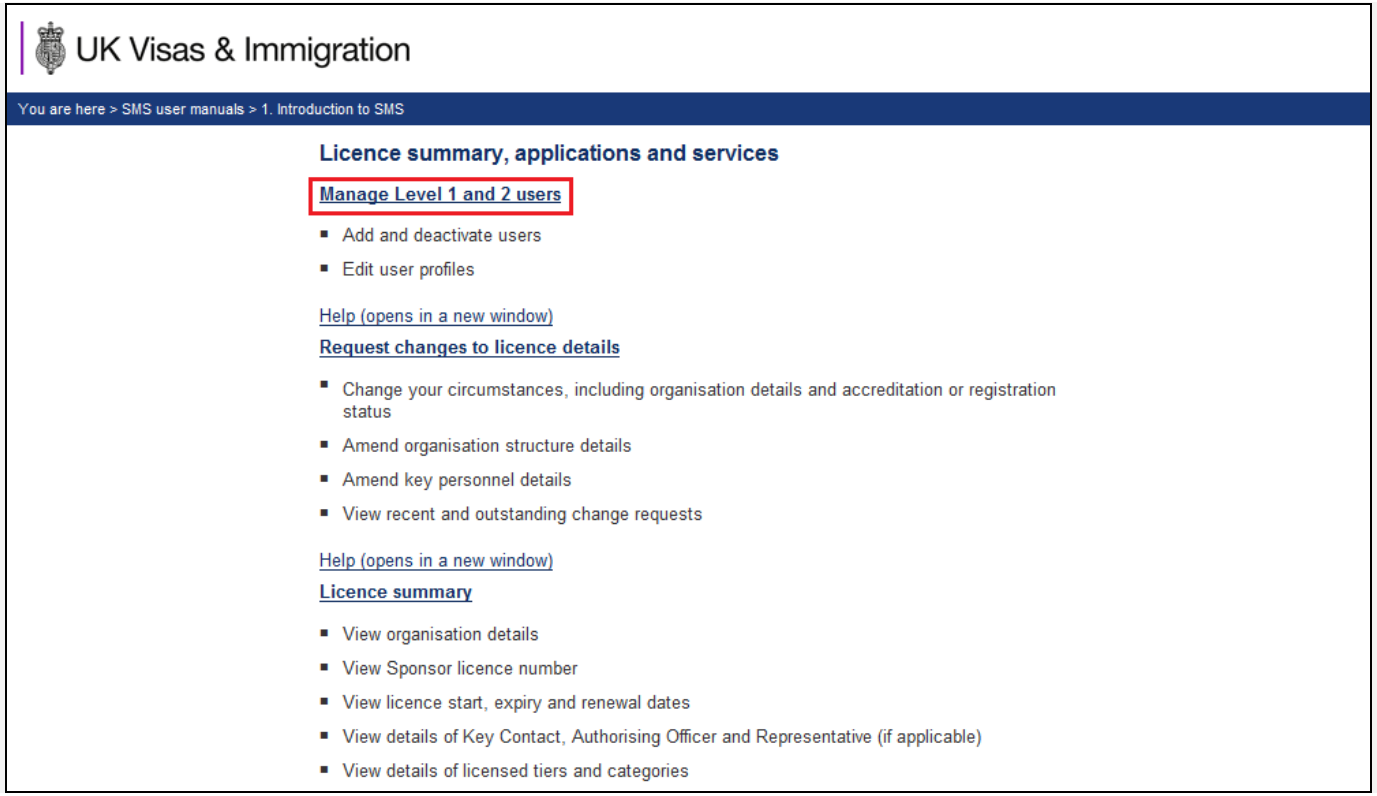
Follow the step by step instructions to amend or deactivate Level 1 and Level 2 users.

You must not use the 'Amend' function to request a new Level 1 user or create a new Level 2 user. If you use this function to add a new user, we will reject your request and you will have to apply again using the **Request Level 1 user** function. A Level 1 user can only amend their own details or those of a Level 2 user. Level 2 users cannot use these functions.

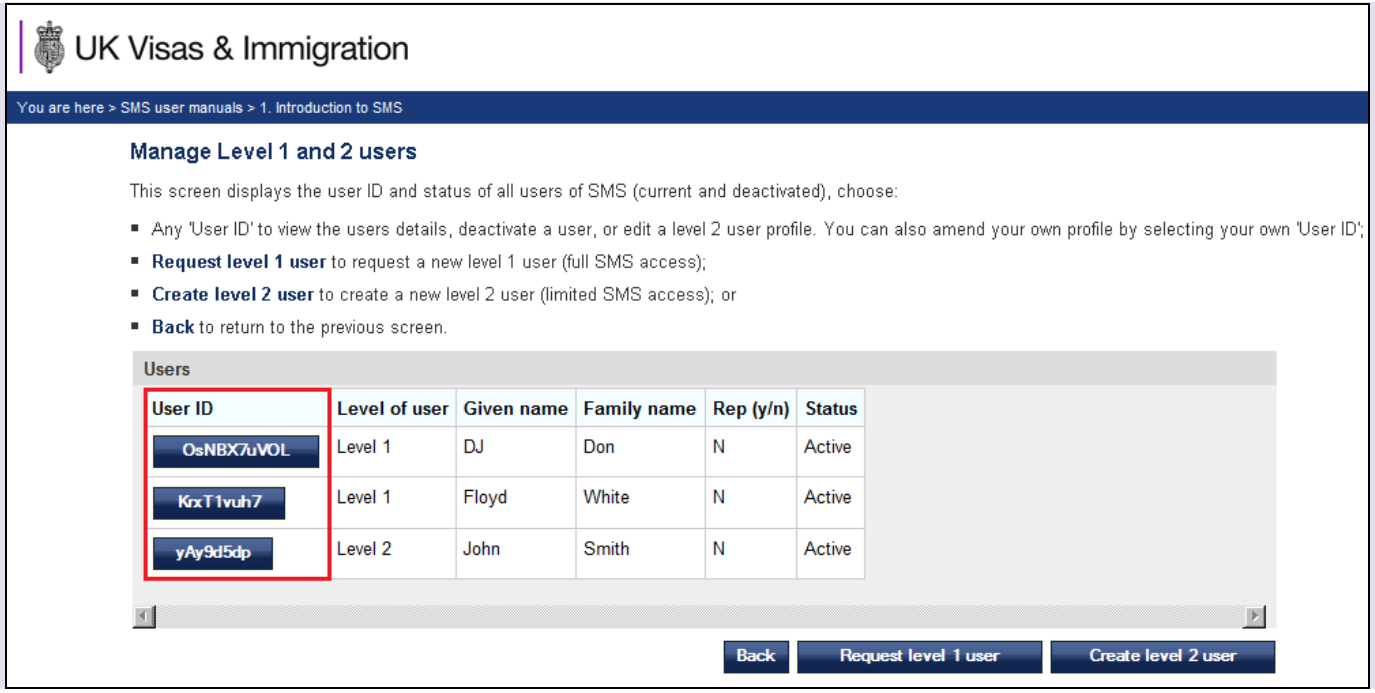
Level 1 users can deactivate all other users but not themselves. You must deactivate users when they no longer occupy a user role, for example, if they resign their position with you. If you have no active Level 1 users registered on your account, you must complete a Sponsor change of circumstances form, which is available from our website.

On 6 April 2014 we introduced new functionality in SMS to automatically apply changes to the address of your existing Level 1 users. If you meet the criteria, changes will be applied immediately and the new details will be instantly visible on SMS. We will write to you if you meet the criteria and automation has been granted.

Step	Instruction	Screen example
1	From the **Sponsorship management system (SMS)** screen, select **Licence summary, applications and services**.	

2	From the **Licence summary, applications and services** screen, select **Manage Level 1 and 2 users**.	

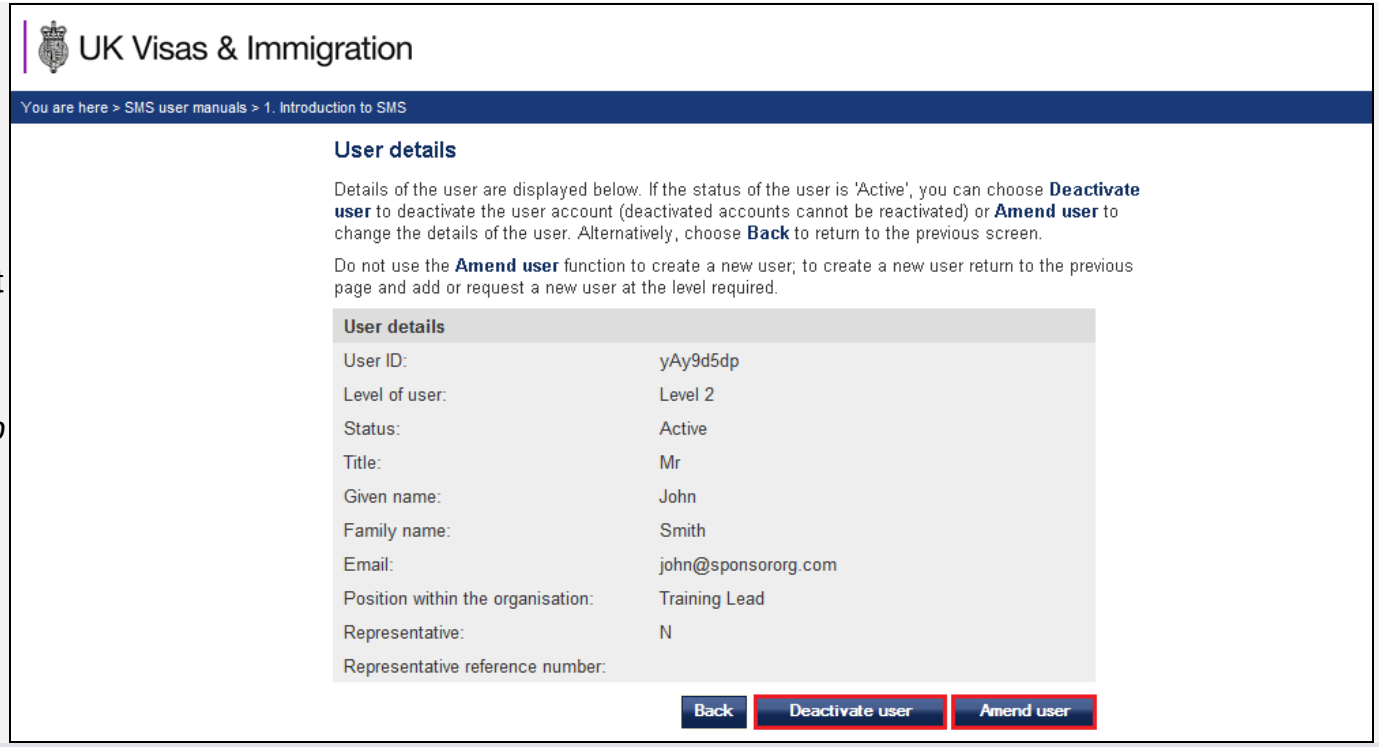
3 From the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen, select your own user ID or that of a Level 2 user.



4

From the **User details** screen, select **Amend user** and see *Step 5*.

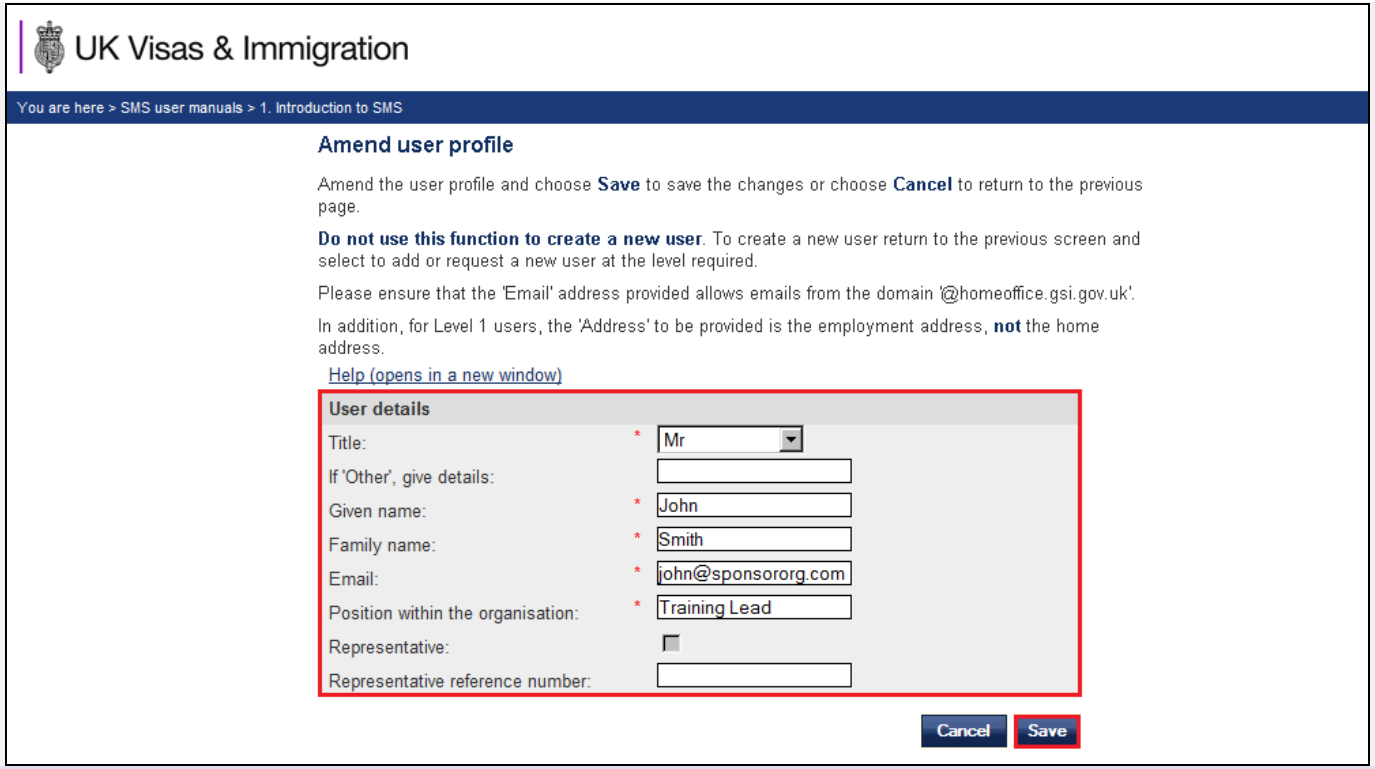
Alternatively, to deactivate a user, select **Deactivate user** and see *Step 7*.



Note **Deactivate user** will only be available if you are not viewing your own details. **Amend user** will only be available if you are amending your own details or those of a Level 2 user.

To amend:

5 From the **Amend user profile** screen, amend the details accordingly, then select **Save**.

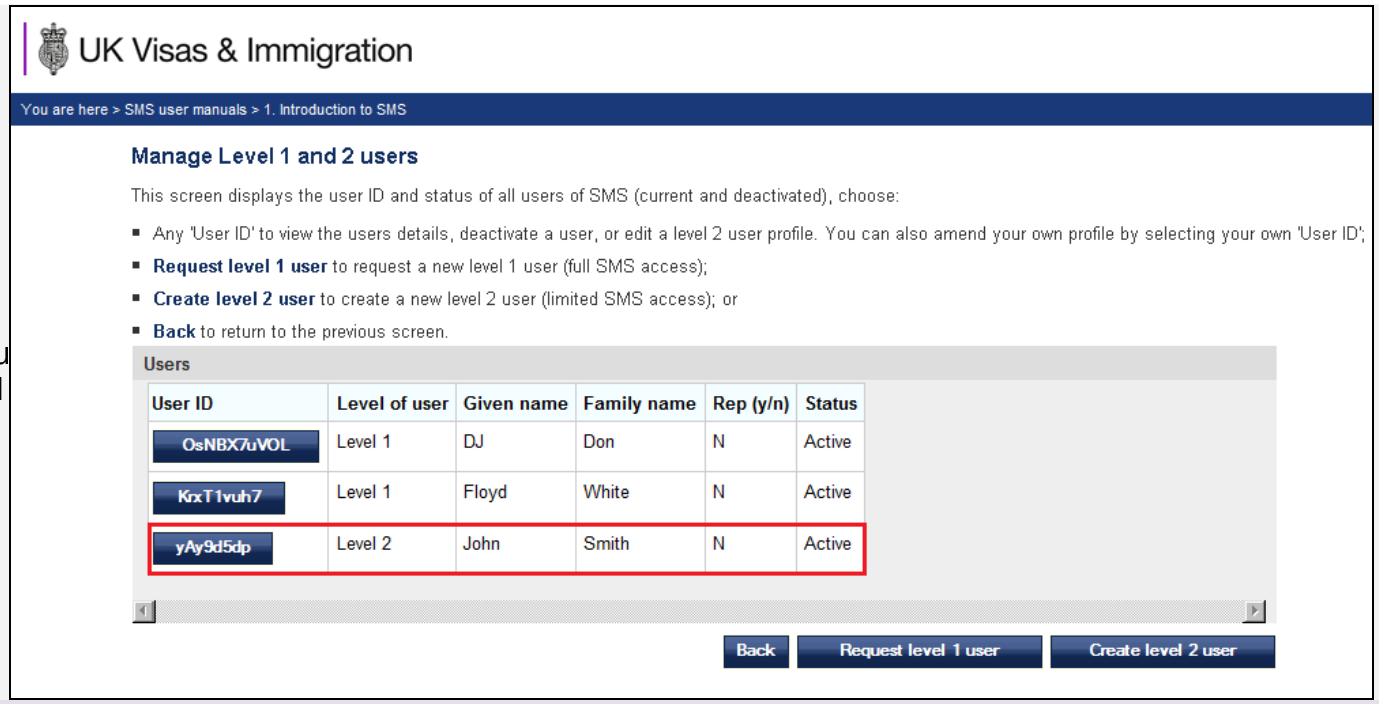


Note

1. If you are amending your own (Level 1) details, your request will either be sent to us to be assessed, or granted automatically. If you are amending the details of a Level 2 user, the changes will be applied automatically.
2. The **Address** required is the work address, **not** the person's home address.

To amend:

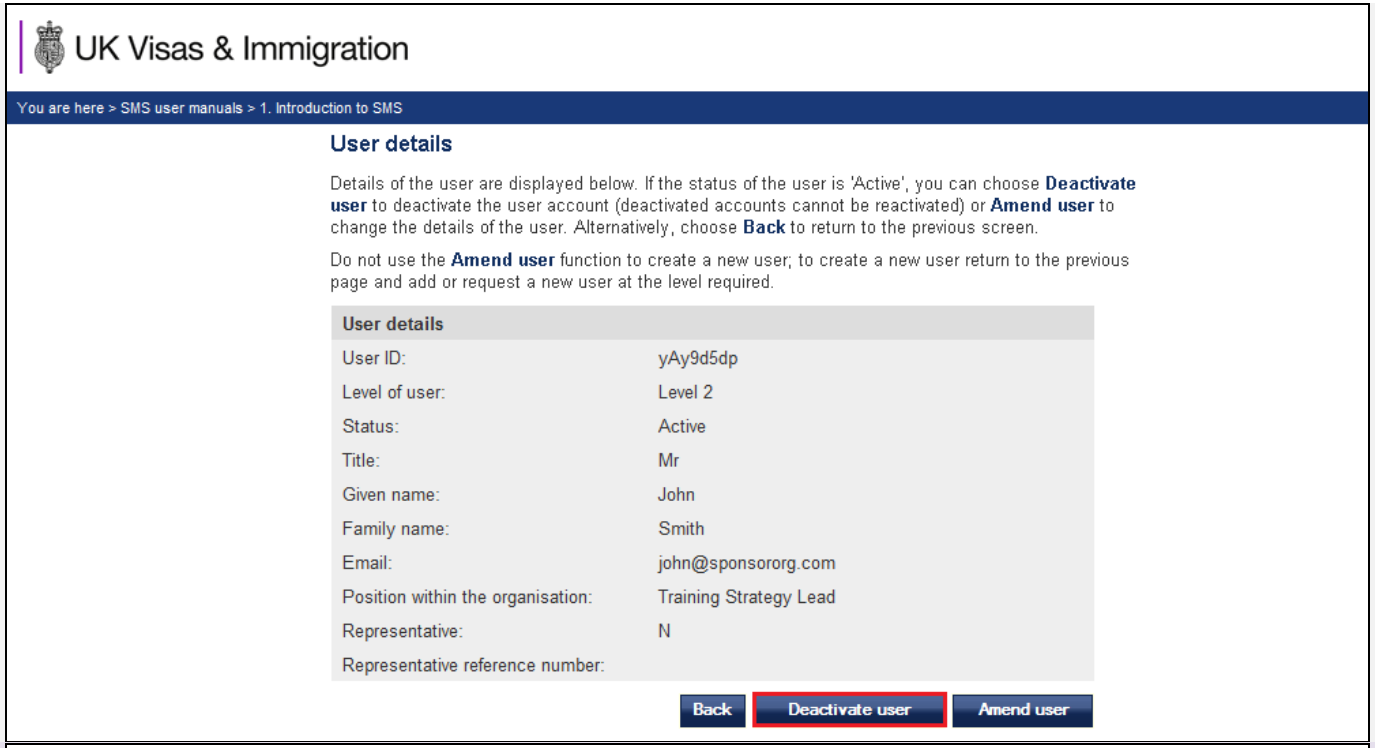
6 The details have been saved and you will be returned to the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen.



Note The Level 1 user remains active whilst amendments are assessed by us, if the changes have not taken effect automatically.

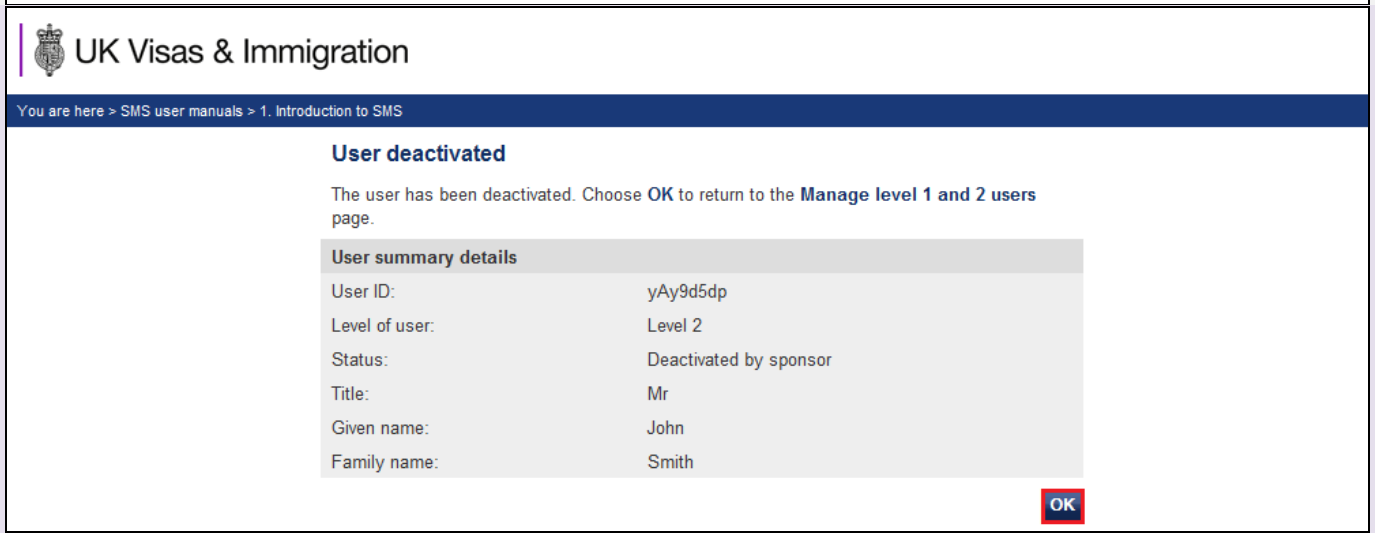
To deactivate:

7 From the **User deactivation confirmation** screen, select **Deactivate user**.



To deactivate:

8 Deactivation of the user is confirmed. Select **OK** to return to the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen.

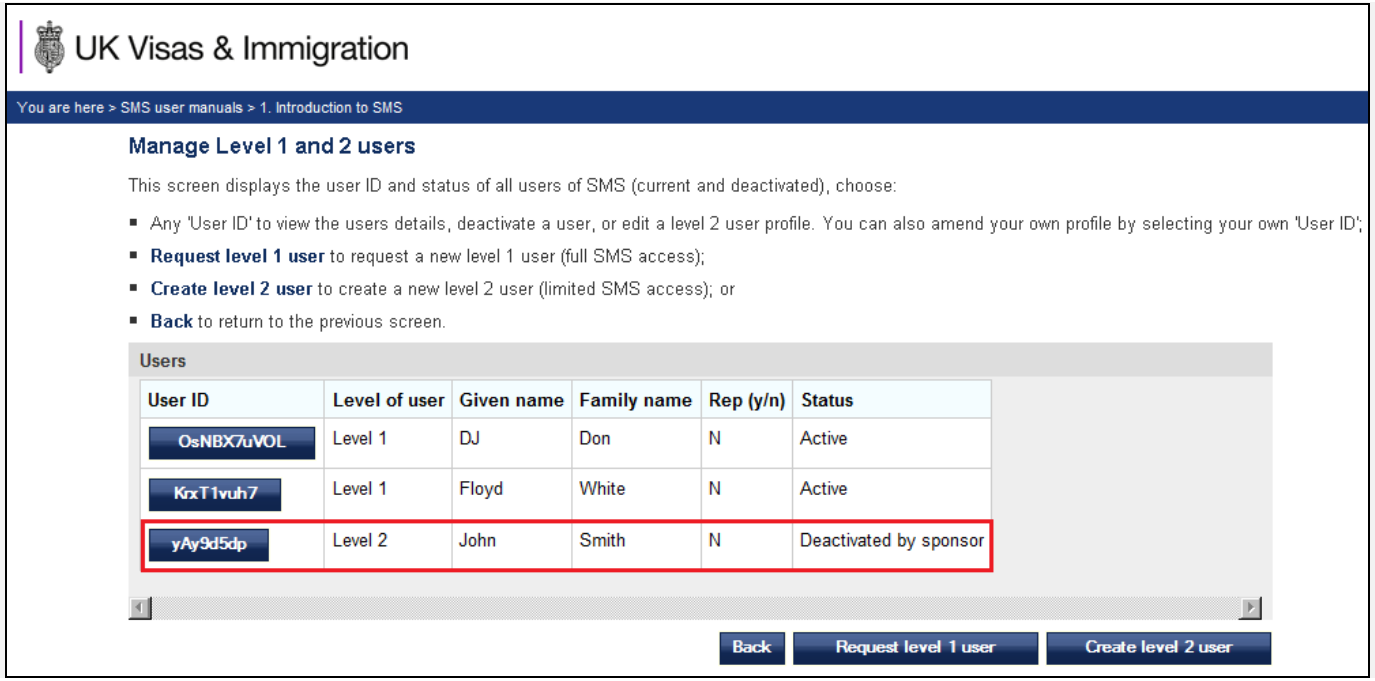


9

To deactivate:

From the **Manage Level 1 and 2 users** screen, you can now see that the user has been deactivated.

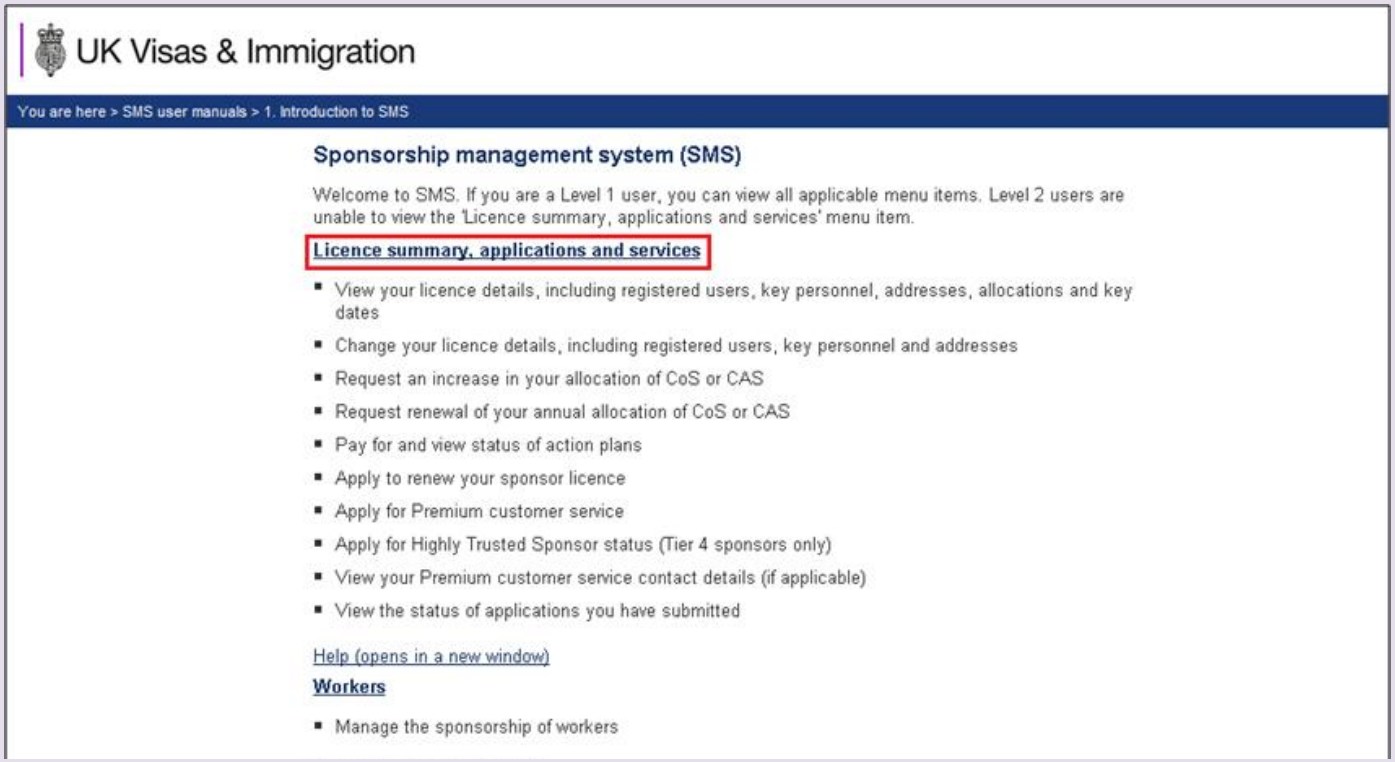
Once a user account has been deactivated, it cannot be reinstated. A new Level 1 user request is required.

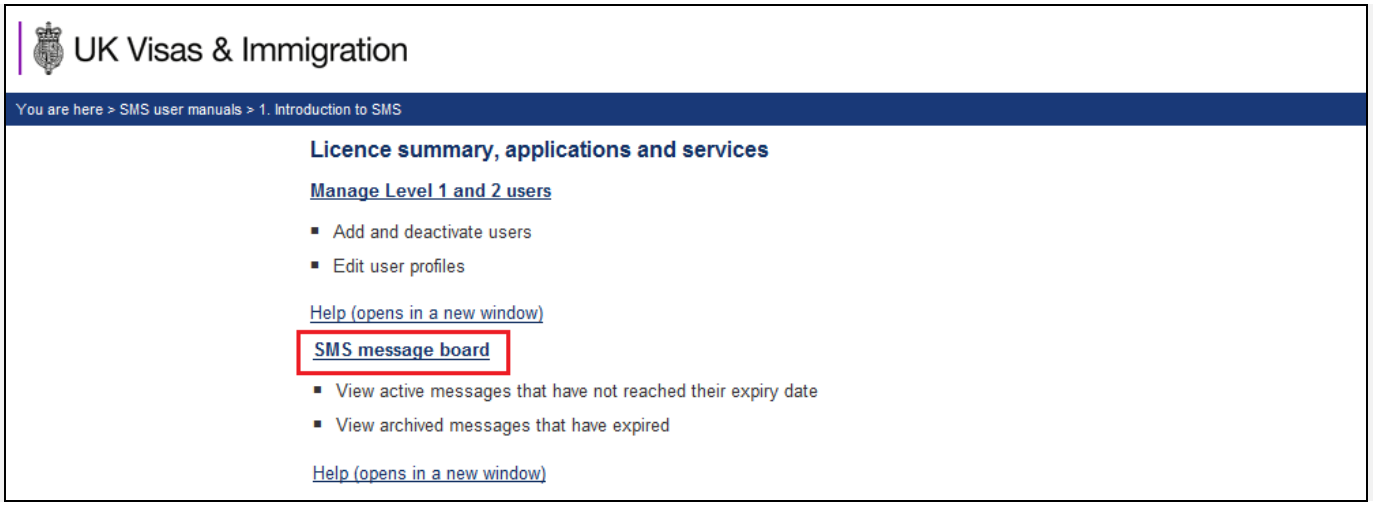


Guide 5: How to view the SMS message board (Level 1 users only)

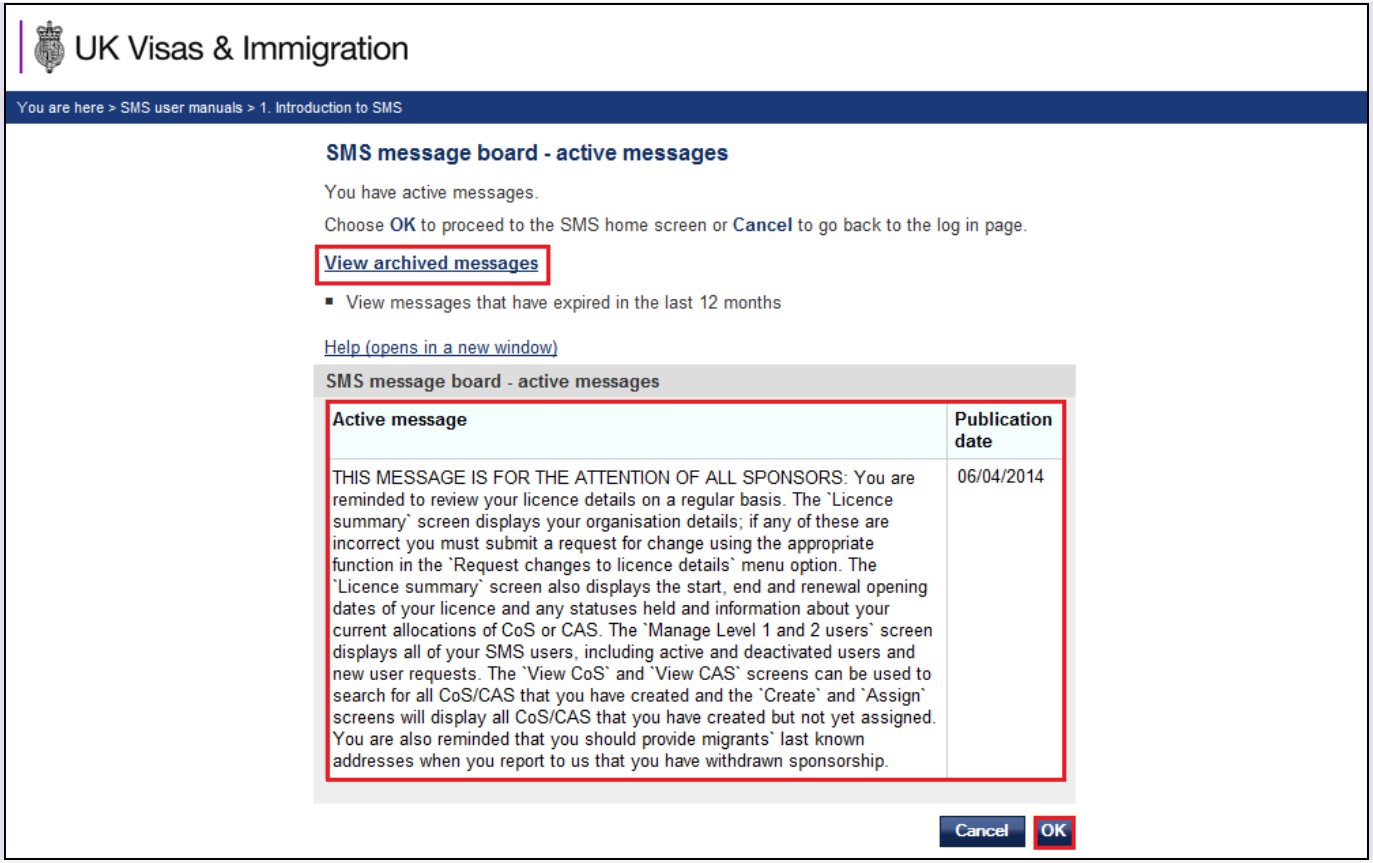
Follow the step by step instructions to revisit messages posted by the Home Office.

When a Level 1 user logs into SMS, they will see the SMS message board. The Level 1 user must read these messages before using SMS.

Step	Instruction	Screen example
1	From the **Sponsorship management system (SMS)** screen, select **Licence summary, applications and services**.	

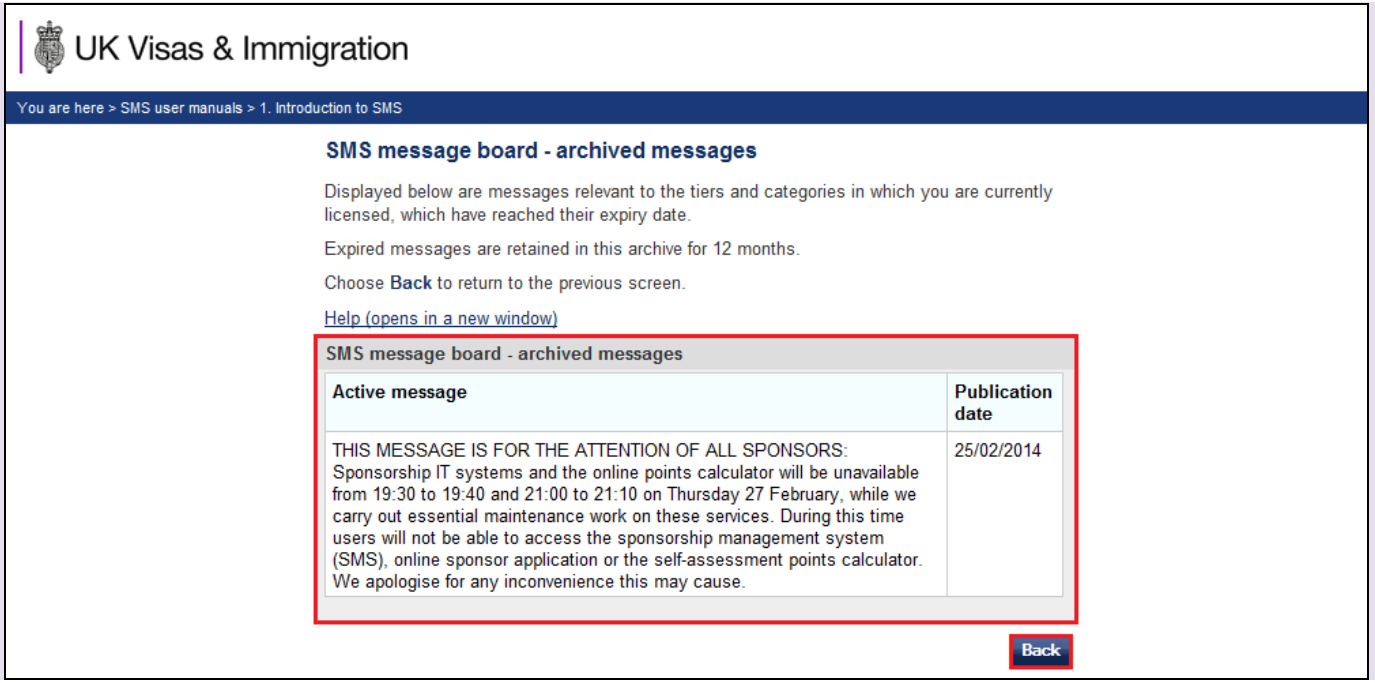
2	From the **Licence summary, applications and services** screen, select **SMS message board**.	

3 From the **SMS message board - active messages** screen, you can view current messages we have posted. If you wish to view archived messages, select **View archived messages**. Alternatively, select **OK** to view the main menu.



Note If you select **Cancel** you will be logged out of SMS.

4

From the **SMS message board - archived messages** screen, you can view all expired and archived messages.

Select **Back** to return to the **SMS message board - active messages** screen.